

128p9mc33 101

- least a mother can do is to master one such little book of easy & pleasant reading upon whatever new subject of study her children may take up: her mature thought & mother-wit will do the rest, & enable her to follow their studies with interest & intelligence: as for 'current thought' & discovery, the newspapers will keep her up in these."

"All this sounds possible; what further suggestions would you make to this aspiring mother?"

"Do not be alarmed - she should pursue a fixed 'Method of Education.'"

"Is that advisable? Children brought up on a 'system' are apt to have little old-fashioned airs of superiority, & to behave as if home influence shut out all other teaching. Besides, the homes in which the mother says, with an air, 'I always' do so & so 'with any children,' are a rather stiff & ungenial. Children are erratic little beings, & any attempt to reduce themselves & their ways to a set routine makes them dull & spiritless; or, supposing their energies find hidden vent, they lose the frankness which is a child's safeguard & charm."

"We are hardly speaking of the same thing; to make what I mean by Method clear, let me read a passage which has struck me from Mr. Coleridge's valuable essay on the subject. He is speaking of Method generally, without reference to Education:—

"The word METHOD being of Grecian origin, first formed & applied by that acute, ingenious,

and accurate people, to the purposes of scientific arrangement, it is in the Greek language that we must seek for its primary & fundamental signification. Now, in Greek, it literally means a way, or path, of transit. Hence the first idea of Method is a progressive transition from one step in any course to another; . . . it necessarily implies a Principle of UNITY WITH PROGRESSION.

All things, in us, & about us, are a Chaos, without Method: as long as the mind is entirely passive, so long as there is an habitual submission of the Understanding to mere events & images, as such, without any attempt to classify & arrange them, so long the Chaos must continue. There may be transition, but there cannot be progress; there may be sensation, but there cannot be thought: for the total absence of Method renders thinking impracticable; <sup>as</sup> we find that partial defects of method proportionably render thinking a trouble & fatigues?

"It is not solely in the formation of the Human Understanding, and in the construction of Science & Literature that the employment of Method is indispensably necessary; but its importance is equally felt, & equally acknowledged, in the whole business & economy of active & domestic life. From the cottager's hearth to the workshop of the artisan

Let us take once more take an example which  
 must come home to every man's business  
 & bosom. Is there not a Method in the  
 discharge of all our relative duties? and is not  
 he the truly virtuous & happy man, who  
 seizing first and laying hold most firmly  
 of the great first Truth, is guided by that  
 divine light through all the meandering  
 & stormy courses of his existence? In  
 him every relation of life affords a prolific  
Idea of duty; by pursuing which into all  
 its practical consequences, he becomes  
 a good servant or a good master, a good  
 subject or a good sovereign, a good son  
 or a good father; a good friend, a good  
 patriot, a good Christian, a good man!!

Thus, considered generally, we ~~cannot~~ <sup>can</sup> fail  
 to see that method implies the contemplation  
 of a desirable end, a full purpose to reach that  
 end, & a careful choosing & steady following  
 up of means, the necessary steps towards  
 the end. No one succeeds in the  
 practical business of life without this  
 kind of method, & the chief element  
 of a man's success is the purpose  
 that is in him: according to that  
 purpose he it done unto thee, appears to  
 me a fair reading of the divine dealings  
 with men. That I complain of is, that  
 while all other important affairs are transacted  
 with



Method, Education alone is carried on in a haphazard, desultory way. Partly out of idleness, partly because they perceive the working of higher wisdom than their own in the development of their children, people rarely form such a "prolific Idea" of Education as should lead to steady noble effort & beautiful results. Aim high: ~~all things are possible to him that believeth; and, at the most~~

"We aimeth at a star"

Shoots higher far than he that means a tree."  
"I see the advantage of a steady definite aim in practical matters; a young man without purpose is a popeless church to his friends. So, too, are the young women to whom one longs to say, 'Do something. Do it, do it, do it!' - ~~through the purpose of purpose only tends to small ends in a general way~~ Still I hardly see what purpose can effect in education beyond the ordinary aim - that one's own children should know that other children know & should behave, as well as other children behave."

"Consider for a moment; you have always purposed that your children should speak the truth, should love each other, should be helpful & gentle to poor people; in these ways they are perfect. You will say it is only as bears & lions pounce & fight - it is their nature to - but with this

MS. A. 9. 2. 30. 1. 23 75  
22  
Other training, nature would have developed  
other tendencies. The truth is, your mind  
has been steadily bent on these ends, and,  
without making much <sup>ado</sup>  ~~fuss~~ about the  
matter, by a word here, a look there, a little  
judicious repression or encouragement,  
you have brought about all you had set  
your heart on. Surely, purpose is power;  
almost irresistible power. Think of the  
Mother of the Wealeys taking her children  
to her own room, each in his turn, with  
the intention that they should learn to  
read in a fortnight; and, in a fortnight,  
though he did not know his letters to begin  
with, each of them could read the Bible with  
ease: what years of idle drudgery were they  
saved! If the purpose & steady effort  
by means of which the children are trained  
to perform the show feats of a circus were  
spent upon real education, an all-round  
development, conceive the result! "  
"I begin to see what you mean by 'all-round  
development'; a parent, having first formed  
an ideal of what a human being ought to be,  
should take steady, progressive steps toward  
producing this ideal in his own child, not  
in one or two directions, but all-round,  
in speech, mind, & behaviour, in thought, feeling,  
faith, even in physique. To think of children  
in this way takes away one's breath; it is  
like looking at the stars in the company of



is 8p24eme3323 76  
an astronomer. Some such idea of a parent's  
duty has come to me from time to time; but,  
even if the lines were plainer & easier,  
should we not take too much upon ourselves  
by following them? Perhaps the great  
possibilities that lie within our children  
affect <sup>parents, now,</sup> ~~us~~ in another way; do you not  
think we are failing in reverence for the young?  
Yes; but it is too often a superstitious reverence  
which tends to obscure the conception of parent's  
duty; the children are fetters in many  
homes, with a sort of divine right to do as  
they like. Do you remember the story, in  
'French Home Life', of the father & mother who  
appeared late at a dinner party, & excused  
themselves by saying that their little daughter  
of three had required them to undress &  
go to bed when she died, & that they had not  
been able to steal off until the child had  
fallen asleep? ~~in an extraordinary illustration~~  
that



What an unnatural system! says a mother.  
 Whatever faults children may have now, they do not  
 do everything for effect; they are at least spontaneous  
~~what~~ <sup>no quality</sup> ~~is~~ <sup>as this</sup> so charming in a child. Well, according  
 to the showings of their own prophets, I suppose it  
 must be admitted <sup>conceded</sup> that the dear friend mothers  
 were not quite natural in company! They took  
 civil pains to turn the best side out; did not  
 tell in each other's presence or years in on  
 another's faces, <sup>no</sup> ~~no~~ <sup>no</sup> ~~no~~ conversation to do because ~~it was too~~  
~~much trouble to human~~ <sup>they were too lazy to pretend</sup> ~~it~~  
 it may not be a bad thing to turn the best side  
 out; <sup>the best qualities</sup> ~~good things~~ develop in the same way; &  
 there is no sure way of meeting a child  
 altogether best side; <sup>to make a child</sup> ~~then~~ <sup>to have him</sup> always  
<sup>show</sup> ~~show~~ his best side, ~~only~~ <sup>and</sup> in his heavy  
 mouth to show. If human beings were perfect  
~~that~~ <sup>but who is</sup> might be allowed to grow up spontaneous  
 in ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> might be admired, but being <sup>as</sup> we are, the  
 in ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> no pains to please others



128p26cme33 24

"Yes; one hopes few parents, French or English,  
would be so weak?"

"The story is, no doubt; an extravagant illustration  
of what appears to be a growing idea, that the  
amiable parent ought rather to gratify &  
appreciate than to control & educate his  
child. But surely it is a mistake to  
worship our children as they are. Let us  
have a high ideal by all means, but less  
of the present, than of the possible child; let us  
add every gracious lineament to the outline,  
drawing from poetic thought, & from the  
stories of noble lives. But let this high  
ideal be regarded as an end to be  
laboured for, & then it is astonishing  
how an exalted standard becomes a  
means of education to parent as well  
as to child."

"I can believe that a woman, fully imbued  
with a sense of what her children should  
be,



138p27Kms33 25-  
may become, almost unconsciously, all  
that a mother ought to be; but I hardly see  
even how to get this ideal in any practical  
way: beautiful & desirable, but too vague  
& unicky to suggest a 'Method of Education';  
it floats before me. What I want to know  
is, what to do, & towards what immediate  
end."

"Education, like other sciences, must  
be studied in detail, & a vague outline  
is, I suppose, all that may be taken in  
at a single glance. The ideal, & the Method,  
the way to it, become manifest only  
as we take 'human nature' to pieces -  
consider what goes to make up a man.  
What every part of him is capable of, &  
to what several laws every part of him  
is in subjection; & how each faculty  
may be assisted to its due development.  
A merely empirical system of education,  
taken up at second-hand, & pursued  
without intelligence, can only be expected  
to produce mechanical results, but -  
the labour of conceiving a true Method  
is rewarded in an extraordinary way; in-  
deed the results aimed at often appear  
to arrive without effort."